

I am strongly opposed of BellSouth's petition for forbearance on sharing their lines to other Internet service providers. Their argument has no merit as they agreed to the Telecommunications Act of 1997, which they negotiated along with other ILECs. There is no stipulation on that agreement that says they do not need to share lines when there is adequate competition.

Although TA 1997 was written with voice and long distance services in mind, I believe it still applies to Internet and other data services that access Bell's infrastructure. As a matter of fact TA 1996 has applied specifically to this particular issue for several years. BellSouth's shortsightedness over an emerging market is no excuse to back down on their agreement. An agreement which they intended to use to increase their long distance market.

To assume that competitive local exchange carriers must provide the entire infrastructure the Bell's had unrestricted access to make is unreasonable. Most of the rights of way the BellSouth had to create that infrastructure aren't available to competitors. Not only that the very idea of having community roads and yards dug up several times over just to lay out redundant lines so that BellSouth can keep ISP's off their own lines is insensitive to the community's needs.

In conclusion I feel that BellSouth's request is unwarranted and not beneficial to the public as a whole. Not only because competition in DSL would be damaged, but because the demands to keep that competition would be unreasonable. As for competitors I feel the cable companies have enjoyed a very similar monopoly status in their own respective markets and in all fairness a level playing field would mean those lines should be opened a little more as well. As for the Bells they made their bed back in '97. Now they need to lie in it.